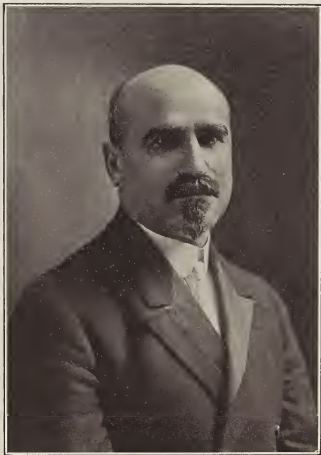




Papazian
**American Churches
Touching Alien
Populations**



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Pam-Home Missions

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THE
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WHEN we are asked, "How can American churches and pastors be put in touch with the alien population?" the question points at something other and nobler than the incident of a physical contact. No effort of any kind is required to come into physical touch with the alien. We are constantly in touch with him. Upon the thoroughfare, in business, in politics, the alien is an unavoidable fact. There is no spot upon the face of the globe where he is in such abundant and picturesque evidence as in New York City, where 478,000 of the

citizens were born in Russia, 340,000 in Italy, 279,000 in Germany, 252,000 in Ireland, 192,000 in Austria, and one out of every four is a descendant of Jacob. To a patriotic American, not endowed with Christian grace, the burning question is not how to touch the alien, but how *not* to touch him.

A man who has adopted for his motto "America for Americans," and who would like to place in New York Harbor the placard "Keep off the grass" in plain sight of immigrant steamers, cannot help looking upon the alien just as the Jews of Jesus's time viewed the inhabitants of Samaria. It is the American who has felt the saving touch of the Saviour

that recognizes in the immigrant a divine challenge to faith and endeavor, a grand opportunity for the church to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, an imperative call upon every church to win the incoming millions of Europe and Asia for Christian manhood and womanhood.

The transformation is to be done through *touch*. If the alien is to be saved for God and man, he must be touched. The church, the pastor and the church member must come in touch with him. Not by proxy (as it has been well put), but by proximity; not by purse, but in person. This was the way of Jesus, and no better way has been discovered. There is no

such thing as salvation by wholesale. Society is uplifted only by uplifting the individual, and no individual can rise far except as another individual comes into immediate touch with him.

Unless this axiomatic principle is clearly understood, no sort of method and no amount of energy will be of much use for the moral and spiritual uplifting of the alien. It is not the method but the man using it that does the job. An expert surgeon, though handling an imperfect knife, may be equal to a difficult operation, while the amateur, though supplied with the most modern instruments, will be helpless in the presence of a

critical case, and may even kill the patient.

The supreme equipment needed by the church in America, in connection with the immigrant population, is not a psychological, or sociological, or ethnological study of the alien, but a study of the alien himself; a knowledge of the man's personality and wife and children and home. Such knowledge is beyond the reach of all except those who are willing to go back to the method of Jesus, who never hesitated to touch the sick, the dead, the sinner, and the publican. The church in America must come into voluntary Christian touch with the alien in America.

Various methods have been suggested with a view to accomplishing this result. Perhaps the most common, but in some respects the least satisfactory, method is *the downtown mission supported by an uptown congregation*. The desire to supply a churchless district of the city with the means of grace is a most creditable one, and the idea of establishing in an alien-inhabited district a missionary of the same race and language in order to reach a class of people who otherwise would be beyond the pale of the church, is certainly most praiseworthy. But the plan is beset with serious limitations which are plain to every person

at all conversant with the facts. Let us consider one of these limitations. In the minds of many church members the downtown mission assumes a class distinction which is the very opposite of the spirit of the Son of God. Between downtown and uptown, between the Italian and the Syrian, etc., on one hand, and the American on the other, between the alien-tongued publican and the English-tongued saint or sinner, there is a gulf fixed which may not be crossed over. This is the idea suggested to the mind of most men and women contributing toward the support of a downtown mission.

Such a plan not only perpetuates the invidious distinctions of race and color, thus preventing the desired process of assimilation into one Christian nation, but also comes far short of the real spiritual needs of both the mission and the church. It substitutes work by proxy for personal Christian effort. It misinterprets the spirit of Christ. It lacks the saving touch of one soul with another; it denies the pastor and members of the church a real contact with the mission. And the penalty accompanies the sin. After years of missionary effort on the East Side or downtown the American remains a stranger to the alien he is trying to help. Meanwhile, the



ARMENIAN CHURCH, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

alien receiving the help remains ignorant of the American. The two are no more "one in Christ Jesus" than if they had lived thousands of miles apart. The church supports one missionary in China and another in Chinatown. She knows the latter field as well as she does the former.

Another method, in many ways superior to this, and well known in many of our larger cities, is *the alien-tongued church*. This plan has the advantage of developing the dignity of the alien community in organizing them into separate churches, in throwing upon them the responsibility of financial support and ecclesiastical government, and in initiating

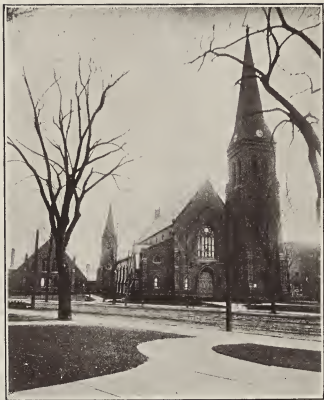
them into the sisterhood of churches.

The existence of such organizations, while by no means the most desirable plan from either American or Christian standpoints, is yet amply justified by the necessities of the situation. The mere fact of a foreign tongue places an impassable barrier between the most hospitable American church and the alien community of the district. Myriads of human souls in the United States would live without God, with no hope in this Christian land, but for the ministrations of the alien-tongued churches. That is why we have Italian churches, Armenian churches, and other foreign-speak-

ing churches in New York City. And what is true of the Island of Manhattan is more or less true of every large city between Boston and San Francisco, between Chicago and New Orleans. The congregations which gather in such houses of worship on the Sabbath and on week days would not make an intelligent and interested audience for any American church. The hearers could not appreciate the utterances from the pulpit, though presented in the simplest Anglo-Saxon idiom, nor, entirely aside from the drawback of a foreign language, would an American pastor know how to accommodate the spiritual truth to the

psychological processes of a foreign mind.

That such churches are more or less appreciated by their American sister churches needs no argument, and we are truly grateful for the sympathy and love bestowed upon us from time to time. The writer certainly has no reason to complain of the attitude of the Congregational ministers of Manhattan toward himself. Yet one often wonders why American Christianity does not take more pains to come in touch with those houses of worship that carry within them the secret of the redemption of the adult section of the alien community.



A POLYGLOT CATHEDRAL
SOUTH CHURCH, NEW BRITAIN, CONN

Different from the two methods heretofore described there is a third, which, to my knowledge, has never been actually tried. The plan would substitute *alien churches ecclesiastically and financially connected with local American churches* for alien churches independently organized and administered. Let us suppose there is an American church anxious to do "Foreign Work." Such a church, according to this plan, would have two ministers, one American and one alien, both full pastors of the church; two congregations meeting apart for the service of preaching, either in the same auditorium at different hours of the day or in different

parts of the house at the same hour, both meeting together for the communion service; one Sunday-school held at the same hour and place in the same language, and one church. The plan, if operated faithfully, would insure the spiritual welfare of the rising generation of the alien community by uniting them all in one Sunday-school, would remove the irritating consciousness on the part of the adult alien, that notwithstanding all that is being done for him through downtown missions he is in reality "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" and a stranger "from the covenants of the promise." It would also enable the alien pastor to contribute

something from his fund of missionary experiences to the collective Christian life of the English-speaking section of the church; and best of all, it would give the American pastor and people a daily opportunity to come in touch with men and women of another stock, whom the Lord has as truly sent to them as He sent the Ethiopian eunuch to Philip the Evangelist. Such a plan, if honestly tried and wisely executed, would go a long way toward the redemption of God's own possession in the midst of our alien population. It would be no less a means of grace unto the home church, by quickening it into a sense of duty and activity never

before experienced. Christian work is like the "quality of mercy" portrayed by Shakespeare—

*"It droppeth like the gentle rain from
Heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice
blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that
takes."*

We have thus called attention to three schemes for bringing the church in touch with the alien. The first, namely, the separate mission, strikes us as the least satisfactory because of its failure to provide a point of contact between the two parties except in a superficial manner, although we would not for one moment question a large quantity of good results credited to it. The second—

the independent alien church—has been tried in many places with good success, and is recognized by all as a necessary agency. However, it is open to the objection that it does not give sufficient contact between the American and the alien. The third, very simple in idea though not easy in execution, appears to us the ideal plan, throwing as it does the American and alien into immediate touch, and promising, as it must, mutual edification.

But are we obliged to choose between the various methods? We think not. The redemption of the alien is so complex and so comprehensive a problem that no one method, however excellent, can

meet the demands. All these plans, and still others which may come to mind, will be required for the successful execution of the task. In fact, the supreme need of the hour is not the adoption of any specific method of work but rather the coming of the church to a new attitude of mind toward the task. The American churches and pastors ought to understand that the alien cannot be redeemed except through personal contact and that they must be willing to come in touch, personal, immediate, loving, saving touch with the individual. They should realize that the first claim of God is not upon their check books but upon their hearts and that the secret of effective



Congregational Missionaries among Armenians in Massachusetts
and Rhode Island
Secy. Emrich and Treas. Walker of Massachusetts Home
Missionary Society

Christian work lies in consecrated touch of one personality with another. The Spirit said unto Philip, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." "Go near and join thyself" is the divine command.

This command, once understood and taken to heart by a church, will suggest the ways and means demanded by local needs. Such a church would make it her first duty to make a canvass of the immediate neighborhood in order to ascertain the dimensions and characteristics of the alien community inhabiting it. Strenuous efforts would be put forth to gather the children of the alien families into the Sunday-school and the young

sons and daughters of Italy and Syria into the meetings of the Christian Endeavor Society. Lady missionaries would visit the homes and extend the right hand of fellowship to wives and daughters of another race. The pastor would devote himself to the study of a foreign language that he might gain access into alien-tongued families. The deacons would establish a highway between the church and the flats occupied by the foreign families. It is impossible to count the various ways by which such a church and such families could be put in mutual contact. The way will be made plain just as fast as the church and the pastor shall place

themselves at God's disposal for willing service.

One fact is plain beyond all doubt. The American and the immigrant in America are ordained to live side by side. God has willed it so. He desires to save them both, and each through the other.

In 1912-13 the Congregational Home Missionary Society, and its constituent State Societies, supported, in full or in part, 433 churches and missions among immigrants. Our missionaries spoke the "Word" in 22 languages, viz.: German, Bohemian, Italian, Swedish, Dano-Norwegian, Welsh, Finnish, Armenian, Spanish, French, Syrian, Persian, Albanian, Greek, Portuguese, Polish, Japanese, Chinese, Swede-Finn, Slovak, Dutch and Bulgarian.

This work needs greatly increased support.

May we hear from you?

